

# South Plainfield Environmental Commission

## Official Minutes - December 9, 2020

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Notice having been filed with the Courier News and S.P. Observer, Chairwoman Dorothy Miele called the Environmental Commission meeting to order in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act at 7:30 pm. This meeting took place at the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center.

**Present:** Dorothy Miele (phone in), Tom Walsh, Danielle Hurst, John Ferguson, Debra Leporino, Adam Butrico, Pete Smith (council liaison) and Brian Bythell (planning board liaison)

**Alternate members present:** Jordan Mandel

**Associate members present:** Lisa Roseo (secretary)

**Others:** Dr. A. Tempel (environmental specialist)

**Absent:**

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 11, 2020 regular meeting were reviewed and all were in favor of approval.

### 3. INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- There were no members of the public present.

### 4. BUDGET - Dr. A. Tempel

- O&E (FY2020 = \$2,225) Since the last meeting we spent \$0. YTD spent = \$577.45. Balance = \$1,647.55.
- Clean Communities - (2019 grant \$50,329.53) Spent since November 11 = \$2,556 on: \$1,467 on sign enforcement and litter removal salary & wages-including \$33 for Wednesday parks litter patrol; \$475 for January litter can maintenance; \$89 to reprint Adopt-a-Spot Guidelines; \$1,000 for assembly program at Franklin School (voided the PO that had been encumbered last spring and was never used) Spent YTD = \$43,893 since 8/15/19. The balance = \$6,437. The balance needs to be spent by 12/31/20. We can ask for a six-month extension once the annual report is complete. The 2020 grant = \$45,370.37; it is not yet available to spend.
- Signs Trust Fund – Spent \$0. The balance = \$595.12.
- Harris Steel Tree Fund – Since the last report we spent \$0. Deposits = \$0. Current balance is \$33,134.

### 5. COMMITTEE and LIAISON REPORTS

#### A. Council Liaison - Mr. P. Smith

- Pete reported that he brought up our comments on the proposed Bamboo ordinance at Monday night's council meeting. The council said if SPEC submits a draft ordinance, it will be given to the Boro Clerk to be put on the agenda for 'title by reading'. The draft would be read/discussed and then voted on at the following council meeting. Dr. Tempel will ask John Abbruzzesse if he still has the draft we looked at last year. SPEC can also look at the draft ordinance on 'running bamboo' that members reviewed and discussed in August.
- Pete also asked members what they'd like him to propose in terms of the street tree removal/replacement plan. Dr. Tempel said SPEC introduced a proposal 10+years ago. She explained that our proposal was in response to residents wanting their trees taken down within the Boro's right-of-way (ROW). The Boro has not been taking down trees unless they are dead or hazardous. SPEC had proposed that a resident be allowed to take down a tree at their expense, depending on the situation. They must then donate the value of two new trees into the tree fund. That would involve some kind of permitting system. The commission felt that would not be an unreasonable resolution to the situation. There would have to be a provision to deny a permit if the tree is a healthy, magnificent species etc. Dr. Tempel noted DPW has resisted replanting street trees. Do we want treeless streets? Pete agrees there are

appropriate tree species to plant in ROW's. Dr. Tempel will look for our proposal and send to members to review. Pete said he will bring our proposal to Paul Rizzo, Amy Antonides etc. and see if we can move forward.

- Pete mentioned the signage proposal the commission discussed in the past. Dr. Tempel explained that proposal was also submitted about 15 years ago. Marybeth Khidre, former zoning officer, and Mike Zushma, drafted a proposed amendment to the zoning ordinance to deal with some ambiguities relating to signs. We now have Kevin Kober removing signs in the ROW, but there is no ordinance that prohibits signs in the ROW. We use the littering ordinance which states that obstructions cannot be placed in the ROW. Dorothy also drafted a sign ordinance at that time. Dorothy will check to see if she can access it on whichever platform she used and forward to members for review.
- John asked if the council is discussing the State's new amended storm water regulations that need to be adopted. Pete will inquire. Brian will also bring it up at the next Planning Board meeting. The details of the amendments were also discussed at last month's SPEC meeting. Dr. Tempel said the last she heard, Len Miller had asked Bob Bucco if he was familiar the amendments, and Bob said he was; an ordinance can be drafted if ordered. Pete will call Len Miller and possibly Bob Bucco.

**B. Planning Board Liaison - Mr. R. Houghton / Mr. B. Bythell**

- Brian said the board met last night. Two applications were on the docket: Hawkeye Development could not be heard because of lack of a quorum due to two recusals. It is rescheduled for 1/12/2021. Deerfield application: Kenyon Ave. & Rahway Ave. subdivision - after five minutes into their presentation, the applicant decided to pull the presentation back for insufficient paperwork. They will rework and resubmit. Pete said he remembers this site plan was previously submitted and turned down for reasons unknown.

**C. Site Plan Review - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Mandel**

- Dr. Tempel reported we received an amended plan for Hawkeye Development. Their postponement gives us a chance to review their revisions.

**D. ERI -**

- There is no new progress to report.
- Debra asked how much of an expense it is to redraw the tax maps; can we use grant money to have them updated? Dr. Tempel said she doesn't know. Debra said once we have the new tax maps and we get back on track, that will help us increase the number of Adopt-a-Spot locations. Dr. Tempel commented that it's not likely paper tax maps will be updated in the digital age. She believes the Police Department had maps digitized a number of years ago. However, they are not shared with the building department; their format might not be friendly with every department. Pete asked what the use is for the tax maps. Dr. Tempel explained that the ERI has color-coded block & lots on the physical maps - e.g. open space, undeveloped private land etc. This makes the open space maps visual, which provides many uses. However, when there is a subdivision, the physical maps do not get updated automatically. Pete will ask Glenn Cullen about updating.

**E. Clean Communities - Dr. A. Tempel**

- Dr. Tempel said Joanne Gemenden has been appointed the new NJCCC Executive Director after Sandy Huber retires at the end of the year. Joanne has 30 years experience with the Clean Communities program.
- Dr. Tempel reported on the Clean Communities session at the League of Municipalities Convention. There was supposed to be a comprehensive presentation on 'Managing Litter During a Pandemic' Apparently the presenter was not there. Instead, the Boonton Twp. CFO, discussed how to calculate a Tax Point. He said municipalities might need more money to deal with increased litter, so they have to know how to make a case for more budget money. A second presenter, Marcus Eriksen, Ph. D., from the 5 Gyres Institute, who does research on plastics in the oceans, said the best approach is to prevent more. It is not possible to clean up what's there. He advocates 'Extended Producer Responsibility'.

That would make manufacturers contribute to the state's cost to manage paper and packaging waste. It would also create incentives to design with the environment in mind.

- Dr. Tempel said Holy Savior was very enthusiastic about the Illusion Maker's virtual quiz show.
- Adopt-a-Spot - Debra said those that received the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter renewal agreements were given a deadline of 10/31. The only response came from Nu Xi Omega for Putnam Park. She is hoping to send out the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter renewals by 12/18 to the 5 or 6 adopters who did not renew throughout the past year.
- CCAB reorganization meeting is set for 1/20, Wednesday, @7pm at HAW. Will talk about organizing the Spring Cleanup.

**F. Land Use - Dr. A. Tempel**

- Green Brook Flood Control Project - Dr. Tempel and John Ferguson attended the 12/2 virtual meeting. John reported that the upper basin portion will not be addressed in 2021. Discussed how to further protect the Stony Brook coming into Plainfield, No. Plainfield & Scotch Plains; maybe property buy-outs. Work continues in Middlesex Boro. Dr. Tempel said So. Plainfield is part of the lower basin where work is planned. However, if the upper basin isn't addressed, So. Plainfield will continue to be affected. We haven't shown an interest in constructing levees in Spring Lake Park.

**G. Forestry - Mr. A. Butrico / Mr. J. Schmidt**

- There was nothing new to report.

**H. Highland Avenue Woods / Public Education - Mrs. D. Miele**

- Dr. Tempel said DPW raked leaves and cleared the rain gutters at the Nature Center.

**I. Historical Sites Preservation - Mr. L. Randolph**

- There was nothing new to report.

**J. Pollution - Mr. A. Butrico / Ms. D. Hurst**

- There was nothing new to report.

**K. Green Team - Mr. T. Walsh**

- Tom said the Green Team will be meeting on 12/17. Dr. Tempel said there are items pending: Dr. Tempel is working on a 'solar friendly' ordinance to move ahead with that action. She added that the Green Team really needs to get busy by the spring uploading documentation to Sustainable NJ if we are going to get re-certified by the end of 2021.

**L. Public Information & Technology - Dr. A. Tempel / Mr. C. Cioffi**

- Dr. Tempel reported on November's Facebook page - 7 posts, reaching 3,044 people with 104 engagements and 13 shares. The Green Team's Facebook had 5 posts, reaching 48 people with 0 shares and 12 engaged. Dr. Tempel said we need to find somebody influential to start sharing the Green Team Facebook posts. She suggested as a goal for 2021, to develop a strategy for making the page more visible. Dr. Tempel mentioned Mayor Anesh is looking for SPEC's 2021 goals. SPEC will submit: proposed new ordinances for bamboo, signage and tree management, Bronze Certification for Sustainable NJ, Adopt-a-Spot enhancements. In addition to our usual agenda, Pete suggested looking into encouraging the Boro to purchase hybrid vehicles; Dr. Tempel also suggested establishing a charging station in the Boro. Dr. Tempel will put together a draft of goals and send to Dorothy for review.

**M. Stormwater Advisory Committee- Mr. T. Walsh**

- Dr. Tempel said Tom's 'Clear the Drains' article was published in TAPinto and was shared to the Green Team Facebook page.

**N. Environmental Specialist - Dr. A. Tempel**

- There was nothing additional to report.

**O. Chairwoman's Report - Mrs. D. Miele**

- There was nothing additional to report.

## 6. INCOMING / OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

- A list of correspondences is attached
- Dr. Tempel mentioned receiving a letter from J.A. Clarkin, attorney for the 150 Durham Realty site plan on New Durham Avenue, notifying SPEC that due to the Covid-19 related difficulty in getting NJDEP permits, the applicant decided not to fill the isolated wetlands on site. Therefore, SPEC's request for a copy of the LOI is no longer applicable.

## 7. OLD BUSINESS

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

- 2021 ANJEC membership renewal notice - \$375 for the commission, \$25 per person for associates/alternates. Members who want to receive a hard copy: Dorothy, Tom, Planning Board, Debra, Adam, and Jordan. Digital copies: John, Danielle and Lisa. Will submit for 7 members and 2 alternates/associates.
- Pete asked about the Alternate II vacancy. Dion Pender submitted his application; waiting for 2021 appointments.
- John mentioned that after 59 years, the OEM Planning Director retired; there is a new director in place. The Hazard Mitigation Plan is moving along. Hoping to have the plan complete in January and submitted to the State/FEMA in February. John also reported that Covid-19 vaccines are coming. Those to receive first will be hospital employees and their EMS personnel and Long-term Care Facilities (47 in Middlesex Cty.). Two shots will be required. John said they were told to make certain to note the manufacturer and lot #, which should match when receiving the second dose. The State is working on how to get the vaccine to the general population.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. The next reorganization and regular meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2021 @ 7:30 pm in the Highland Avenue Woods Nature Center - 115 Sylvania Place.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Roseo  
Environmental Commission Secretary

## ACRONYMS

ANJEC	- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
BOA	- Board of Adjustment
CAG	- Community Advisory Group
CBA	- Clean Business Association
CCAB	- Clean Communities Advisory Board
CFMP	- Community Forestry Management Plan
DOT	- Department of Transportation
DPW	- Department of Public Works
EIS	- Environmental Impact Study
EPA	- Environmental Protection Agency
ERI	- Environmental Resources Inventory
EWA	- Edison Wetlands Association
FEMA	- Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOW	- Friends of the Woods
GBFCP	- Green Brook Flood Control Project
HAW	- Highland Avenue Woods
KCS	- Known Contaminated Sites
LEEDS	- The Lead in Energy and Environmental Design
LOI	- Letter of Interpretation
MCDSWM	- Middlesex County Division of Solid Waste Management
MCUFAC	- Middlesex County Urban Forestry Advisory Committee
NJCF	- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
NJDEP	- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NOV	- Notice of Violation
OEM	- Office of Emergency Mgmt.
OTOSP	- Oak Tree Open Space Parcel
PRP's	- Potentially Responsible Parties
ROSI	- Recreation and Open Space Inventory
ROW	- Right-of-Way
SPBA	- South Plainfield Business Association
SPEC	- South Plainfield Environmental Commission
USACE	- United States Army Corp of Engineers